1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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other one which has been known there for many years, principally in the west, which bears the name of *Vaudoux*. . . . But it is not only as a dance that the *Vaudoux* merits consideration, for it occurs under circumstances which assign to it a place among the institutions where superstition and bizarre practices play a considerable part." [3]

In Dahomey, whence the term has come, *vodun*, as has already been stated, signifies "god" and is a general name for all deities. This source of the word has likewise long been known, as a reading of St. Mery shows:

> "According to the Arada Negroes, the real followers of *Vaudoux* in the colony . . . *Vaudoux* signifies an all-powerful and supernatural being on which depend all the events that come to pass on this globe." [4]

Similarly, de Vassière [5] quotes with approval a parallel definition from Peytraud, while modern Haitian writers also emphasize its Dahomean origin.[6] This meaning of the word had, however, undergone a change in its new home even during pre-Revolutionary times, for, according to St. Mery, the "all-powerful and supernatural being" had come to be a non-venomous serpent that stood as a symbol "for all those who professed this same doctrine." Today in Mirebalais even this identification is a thing of the past, though the prominence given serpent-worship in Haiti by most writers [7] would make it reasonable to suppose that elsewhere in the island serpents are maintained by priests of the *vodun* cult and play an important role in the rites at which the gods are worshipped. Indeed, one priest from Arcahaie encountered in Mirebalais mentioned the fact that in his own temple he kept such a snake. Yet in our valley no worship of serpents as such was encountered, and there were even those who declared that they had no hesitation in killing any snake, though these brave assertions could not be tested. Serpent-worship in Mirebalais

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may perhaps be said to have come to this: Adherents of the African cults refrain from killing the snake, and should they do so by accident, the African custom of giving ceremonial burial to any creature having supernatural importance is followed as an atonement. Where this is omitted, difficulties of so serious a nature are felt to threaten that to prevent them a priest of the cult is called upon to offer up a sacrifice and to beg forgiveness even after the little ceremony of burial has been performed.[1]

Inasmuch as *vodun* flourishes in Mirebalais despite the minor role of serpent-worship, it is evident that in seeking to understand its nature and its philosophy other aspects must be considered. Two historical facts must be kept constantly in mind in making this analysis, for without them, what follows would be meaningless. The first is that *vodun* derives from a backgroumd of African theology and ceremonialism. The second is that the Negroes have continuously been subjected to the influence of Catholicism during the centuries that have passed since their introduction into the island.

Yet another point may prove suggestive in providing a useful point of view for an analysis of the *vodun* cult. This bears upon a difficulty impossible and happily unnecessary to resolve in the field study of religion, which arises out of the degree of variation in answers to questions dealing with the same point. These answers differ not only according to the status of the individual in the cult, since layman and priest have understandably different concepts of the functions of deities based on unequal degrees of expert knowledge, but the extent to which an individual has religious interests or is indifferent to them influences the nature of his responses. A fundamental fallacy results from the fact that except where there is an officially sanctioned theology — which makes for dogma, and often for perfunctory worship, in contrast with the living dynamic nature of Haitian peasant belief and ritual — there are no "real" answers to questions in the field of religion. The

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person of great experience was pointed out who was believed able to stop a runaway horse without putting a finger on him. One widely spread type of charm is an *arrêt* against the *mal jòk*, or evil eye. Mention has been made of protective charms when the measures taken to guard growing crops were discussed, and also in connection with safeguarding the well-being of infants. The power in this latter type of *garde* often is made to reside in a seed on a string or chain, or a cross of beads sewed on cloth, to represent the four corners of the earth.

Because charms are the outer symbols of magic, detailed examples of their making will give insight into the nature of charms in general. The first of these which may be described was a *garde*, made by a *mambu*, to relieve a pregnant woman whose milk had begun to flow before the birth of her child — a sign that an evil spirit had been sent her by an enemy, and that her delivery would therefore be fraught with danger. During the séance the *mambu* was continuously possessed by her god, Ogun, whose identity was shown by her whistling. Before the *mambu* as she commenced her incantation were some *clairin*, lighted red candles, a new piece of soap, incense, sulphur, garlic, light brown shoemaker's thread, an empty bottle, a bottle filled with a green, evil-smelling lotion called *baigne de mambu*, a chick, and three iron nails. As she tied the cord in knots she muttered her spell; then, taking the empty bottle, she p[illegible]n it a bit of the incense, sulphur, garlic, some soap, some cl[illegible], and some *baigne de mambu*. With the knotted cord she tied a cross made of two nails to the neck of the bottle, repeating her formula before she put it down. Instructing the pregnant woman to take the bottle, she said: "Speak into it and say everything you wish."

She then took the chick, opened its beak, and wrote on it with a pencil, continuing the incantation the while. With the pencil she also made marks on the thighs, the wings, the upper joints, and the leg joints before she handed it to her client

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with the words: "Tell it what you have to say. Tell it that you are passing on to it all your pain, everything." When she had finished, the *mambu* once again took the chick, holding its head as she described three crosses on the ground with its beak. She now put some of the earth in which she had made the crosses into a white dish, returning the chick to the woman and telling her to speak to it again, and this time to expectorate three times into its open beak as she finished. The *mambu*, holding the fowl in one hand, thereupon poured some of the mixture from the bottle, and some *clairin*, in the plate that contained the earth, lighting the *clairin* with her free hand and directing the patient to rub her nipples with it. Then she returned the bottle to the pregnant woman, telling her to recount her need to it once more, and then to cork it.

The *mambu* next chewed some of the soap and rubbed it over the cork to "seal" the bottle, saying: "When you send a letter through the mail, you seal it," and instructed the pregnant woman to place the bottle in her house and see to it that it was not uncorked, for in it was contained her life and the life of her child. "Open it before delivery and pass its contents over your abdomen." A cord was put about the waist of the woman and tied tightly, not to be untied until the growing child in her womb should cause it to break of itself. While the *garde* was being made the *mambu* sang this song:

M' pas 'ti bête,	I am not a little animal,
M' pas 'ti cochon,	I am not a little pig,
Pou' on cové,	That one can confine me,
Pou' on marré moin.	That one can tie me up.
Ça qui fait bien,	He who does good,
Cé bien li wé;	Good he will see;
Ça qui fait mal,	He who does evil,
Cé mal li wé.	Evil he will see.
Côté marré corde moin,	Where I tie my cord,
Yo passa la qui li.	They are stronger than it [the evil?].

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789 The chick was released in the open countryside. Were a per-
825 son to capture and eat it, the evil that had been transferred to the fowl would come to him. Many such fowl live wild in the woods, and no one touches them.

789 There was no hesitation in permitting spectators to witness the making of this charm; rather it was held to be good business to allow anything pertaining to a cure to become widely known. Had the transaction involved evil magic, great secrecy would have been exacted of the principals, and no others would have been present. The operation of sympathetic magic in this case — the fact that the ingredients were either cleansing or evil-smelling, for example, indicates the concept behind the charm. Similarly, the assertion that the
[825] chick which figured so prominently in the rite would carry away the *wanga* sent against the pregnant woman shows how the forces of "white" magic are manipulated to combat "black."

Another *garde* had for its purpose the protection of its owner against evil, and, being a *garde Malt' Carrefour*, was especially designed to enable him to go about unharmed at night. Though carefully made, it was not actuated by its power at the end of the séance, nor were extraordinary demands made of it and reciprocal promises of rewards for gratifying them, since it was then explained that it was desired as an example rather than an actively potent charm which, because of the difficulties of properly serving it away from Haiti, might cause its possessor harm. To make this charm the following ingredients were furnished:

One half-ell of red cotton	Roasted maize
A bottle of *kola*	Seven "red" copper sous
Clairin	A candle
Cakes	A spool of black thread
Cassava bread	Some ashes

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time, or are animals given power as *baka* by these *loa*. The "squad" of the *baka* includes the following:

'Ti Kita Demembré	Simbi Proméné
'Ti Jean Pié Sèche	Simbi en Deux Eaux
Erzilie Gé Rouge	Simbi Troi' Z'ilé

Baka appear as small bearded human-like figures with flaming eyes, or as cattle, horses, asses, goats, bears(?), and dogs. Sheep never become *baka* because the sheep, as represented on the chromolithographs, is the animal of the Virgin and therefore cannot be a creature of evil. The mule also is never a *baka* for reasons given in the myth explaining how it came to be accursed.

> One day Jesus came down a path astride a mule. When he came to a crossroads a snake so frightened the mule that he reared on his hind legs, throwing Jesus to the ground. Jesus became angry and cursed him, saying that from that day onward mules would never bear offspring. He also cursed the snake, saying that thereafter it must forever go about on its belly.

Whether because of this or because of its long, alert ears, the mule is favored for night travel, for this animal is held able to sense these creatures of evil and give his rider warning of them. A black cat can become a *baka*, but there are also good black cats that drive away evil spirits. Even if a black cat-*baka* is sent away, nothing happens to its owner.

A *baka* named Babako, sometimes called Bakuba Baka, is believed to live in the *mapou* tree, where he is "fed" in December. "He is the chief of [evil] magic, is magic itself," it is said, and "*C'est baggai diabolique, gros baka*—he is a thing of the Devil, a great *baka*." For this reason the *mapou* tree is greatly feared, and that is why those who "serve" the gods of the *mapou* do it in secret and are dealt with circumspectly.

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754 Some *baka* are believed to be " doubles " of sorcerers who take
776 animal form and roam at night doing evil. Pigs encountered
825 at night are especially dreaded because of this, and those of a gray color, held to be more potent for evil than those of any other shade, are sedulously avoided. The tale is told of a man who, having encountered a gray pig at midnight which passed between his legs at great speed, was ill for months afterwards. It is also recounted how several men of uncommon bravery waited for one such pig and beat it, and how the next morning an old woman was found on whose bent back wounds inflicted
776 by sticks could be seen. It is because of stories such as this that it is held important to worship the good *loa*. For if the devotee of a *loa* meets a *baka* at night, the *loa* comes to his head and the *baka* flees in terror. An autobiographical incident was related to make this point. When a lad, the man who told the tale joined his playmates in an escapade which had as its aim to frighten some young women returning home late from a *vodun* dance. Draped in white sheets they stationed themselves near a bridge, turning about before lighted candles in the ground. The young women were possessed by their *loa* the instant they caught sight of these apparitions, who promptly fled the scene to avoid capture by those who came running in reply to the songs and cries emitted by the protecting gods!

776 *Baka* are often employed to guard buried money. " In this
454 country, when you find money buried in jars, it is an affair of *baka*. There is never one jar, but always two or three, and you must call a *hungan* to find out which one you may take and which you must not touch. Generally the finder is allowed to take half of the treasure, for if he took all, he would be tormented by the *baka* who had been left as guardian." Such jars, it is said, are usually found with human bones beside them or under them, and tradition has it that the slave-owners who are believed to have been strong in magic customarily killed the most evil slave on a plantation that his spirit might keep watch over the jars. If the owner never returned, the spirit of the

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slave, as a "sold *baka*," remained to wreak vengeance upon anyone who dared disturb his charge.

The reality of the *baka* to the Haitian was made dramatically vivid by an incident involving an old blind and deaf horse. It occurred one night on the principal streets of the town of Mirebalais itself. The horse was first noticed as the sun set, groping his way along, and finally circling the turn of the road. Though people shouted at the animal, he would not give way. As darkness came and doors and windows were barred, the horse blundered into the small veranda of a house inhabited by an elderly woman, her daughter, and her grandchildren. The younger woman cried out with fright when, timidly peering about the side of the house, she saw their visitor, but the older woman, whose age made her fearless in the face of this supernatural danger, opened a window and vigorously attacked the animal with a heavy stick, while he unhurriedly tried to get clear of the blows and finally moved on to the next veranda, and so from house to house down the street. On this night the habitual tranquillity did not settle over the town, and all of the next day and many days thereafter there was quiet talk of the danger that had been abroad, and much speculation of its intended destination.

The *baka* are sometimes confused with the *démons*, as is seen in the fragmentary information that was obtained about the existence of secret societies, so feared by Mirebalais folk because of their reputation for working all kinds of evil that it was with difficulty that even the names of two of them could be learned — the "Bissago," whose members appear at night wearing horns and holding candles, and "Les Cochons sans Poils." The former, termed *démons*, are believed to be able to change into animals when they do their evil work, a feat which would seem to make them *baka*. The societies all meet in the open country at night, and each has a small drum. They are called together by the beating of one rock against another in a manner reminiscent of the Zangbeto society of Porto Novo, Dahomey.

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it joins the flooded Artibonite as its master accompanies Clairmé on his way to consult with the great ruler of the sea, Agwe. Actually, at the height of the rainy season the force of the light colored muddy water of the major stream holds back the darker colored flow of its tributaries in a manner which accords with the legend, so that, observing the Tombe River at one such time, the Haitians who were present said: "The Tombe is waiting for its master to pass."

Gede, a deity who figures in both the Rada and the Pétro groups as chief functionary under Baron Samedi, ruler of cemeteries, is tolerated rather than favored, though his rewards to his devotees include the refusal to dig a premature grave for them. When Gede possesses a devotee at a dance, Damballa, Ogun, and the other Rada gods "leave" at once, and those who are possessed by them come out of their possessions. For though Gede is no less a *loa* than other gods, "He is a *zombi* and is fed apart"; as the Haitians say: "The *loa* are like human beings. They will not mingle with the dead, and Gede is of the dead." His color is black, and Saturday is his sacred day. He "eats" salt herring, hot peppers, cassava, roasted corn, roasted bananas, and other roasted foods. He drinks *clairin* — much of it — and at great ceremonies a black goat and chickens are killed for him, as well as those chickens with ruffled feathers called *djakati*, which in all the New World, as in Africa, are believed to discover and dig up magic charms set against their owners. He lives in the cemetery, "behind the cross." There are a number of deities whose names are compounded with the name of Gede — Gedenibo, Gedeonsu, Gedehun — and hence the question whether or not this is a generic term or a specific designation is pertinent. There is no agreement on this point, and it could only be established that those *loa* who bear the same name, such as all Ogun or Bosu or Simbi deities, are brothers; but who the parents of these groups may have been is not known.

Associated with Simbi and Gede in the Pétro "squad" are

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

7. *In the Mapou Tree: Magic, Demons, and Compacts*

It is said by many Haitians that the loa are inclined to shun the mapou tree, for it is the secret rendezvous of countless kinds of demons. On certain nights, they say, you may see a chink of light showing through the trunk of the great mapou, indicating that the demons are in macabre session.

Sometimes it is the baka who meet there to feast and discuss their blood-curdling plans. The baka are described as small and evil creatures, human in form, with red eyes, and legs or arms covered with skin but no flesh. They change into animals at will and may roam the countryside as cats, dogs, or cattle. The baka are notorious sorcerers, and they perform only malevolent acts. They are reputed to "eat people," literally as well as figuratively. Stories are heard of such-and-such a man or child who disappeared and was presumed to have been eaten at a feast in the mapou tree. One man who passed a mapou in the dark of night reported that he heard muffled singing coming from within its trunk, accompanied by the pounding of mortars in which a gruesome feast was being pulverized. But the baka "eat" people also in the sense that they destroy them. It is said sometimes that a person with a withered arm or leg has been "eaten" by a baka. Perhaps he was an innocent victim; possibly he struck a horse or dog which was really a baka; or perhaps he simply brushed against a baka in the market place. Sometimes the baka directs his evil in the most indiscriminate sort of way, "eating" whatever human being he meets. Animals which behave strangely are suspected of being baka in disguise, and they are given wide berth.

A cow once found within an old brick-covered spring was taken to be a baka because no cow could have passed through the small doorway of the spring. It was assumed that she had entered as a small baka and had then changed to her animal form. The spring went unused for days, until some children reported that the baka had vanished. The cow was

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

never seen again, and after a prêt' savane had read prayers over the spring the people again drew water from it.

Baka more often change themselves into gray or red pigs, but one ingenious baka was said to have transformed himself into a bicycle, which was seen traveling alone at night on the road from Port-au-Prince to Léogane.

Some people wear charms against the baka's malevolence; but the most effective weapon is the cocomacaque stick. The cocomacaque, or monkey palm, is a palm tree that grows only a few feet high. It has magical powers to drive off not only baka but other evil beings as well. When the tree is growing in its natural state, it is said, you must never mention its name in its own presence. Should you say within its hearing, for example, "Look at the cocomacaque," it will wilt and fall over, losing all its vital powers. The trunk of this midget palm is a favorite material for fashioning a walking stick or a short baton. A man going on a long journey into strange country may carry a cocomacaque stick with him to brandish at the crossroads where baka lurk, or to drive off strange animals that may be baka in disguise.

In their relationships with human beings, the baka are not always random. Sometimes, for a terrible price, they will undertake to make a man rich or to "eat" his enemies for him.

In some parts of Haiti, baka seemingly have found their way into the ranks of the loa. In the Congo-Guinée pantheon there is a deity called Bakulu Baka, or Babaku Baka. He is a malevolent spirit who "eats" people in the best baka tradition, and he lives, significantly, in the mapou tree, which is shunned by all good loa.

The *engagements*, or compacts, in which baka sometimes figure are usually made with another sort of creature, the *djab*, or devil. A djab is a manlike being but is superhuman, ferocious, and terrible. Some djab are small, some large, some innocent in appearance, some grotesque. They are supernatural sorcerers who deal out riches in exchange for human beings. A frustrated or desperate man may go to a djab and ask for a favor, which will usually be granted for a heart-rending price. Persons who appear to gain wealth suddenly may be suspected of having entered into an *engagement* with a powerful djab.

One story is about a man of Port-au-Prince who, needing a large sum of money, went to a famous djab who lives in a cave known as Trou Fourban. This powerful djab agreed to provide all the money required, but only on condition that the man deliver to him each year one of his children. The man suddenly came into a large fortune. But when the anniversary of his compact arrived, he did not go to Trou Fourban